**Sir John Tenniel (February 28th 1820-February 25th 1914)**

* John Tenniel was born in Kensington, London, and was the youngest son of John Babtist Tenniel. It became apparent from an early age that he had a talent for drawing.
* He attended the Royal Academy as a probationer and then as a student, but left dissatisfied with the teaching there and proceeded with self-education. However, between 1837 and 1842 he contributed to exhibitions held by the Academy.
* In 1836 Tenniel submitted his first picture to the Society of British Artists.
* In 1840, at the age of twenty, he was accidentally blinded in one eye while fencing with his father.
* In 1845 Tenniel contributed a sixteen foot cartoon, entitled “The Spirit of Justice” to a competition for designs for the mural decoration of the new Houses of Parliament. While his contribution was not accepted, he did garner enough attention to receive a commission to paint a fresco in the Hall of Poets in the House of Lords.
* In 1850, growing interest in his work became cause for Tenniel’s invitation to become a joint cartoonist with John Leech at *Punch*, (a weekly magazine of humour and satire published 1841-1992 and then from 1996-2002) having been selected due to his detailed illustrations to Aesop’s *Fables* in 1848.
* John Tenniel married in 1852, but sadly his wife died only two years later, leaving no children.
* In 1860 he illustrated Shirley Brooks’ *The Gordian Knot*, which he considered to be his worst as an illustrator, though he also illustrated for Brooks’ later work, *The Silver Cord* a year later.
* In 1845, at the age of 45, John Tenniel completed the work for which he is best remembered and which cemented his status in the history of illustrators. This was the year he completed illustrating the first edition of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, though the first print run was ultimately shelved as Tenniel objected to the print quality. A new edition dated for 1866 became an instant best-seller.
* In 1872 (dates vary from 1870-1872) saw the completion of Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, which Tenniel also illustrated.
* In 1874 Tenniel was elected a member of the Royal institute of Painters in Water Colours.
* Through Tenniel’s continued career at *Punch*, he contributed around 2,300 cartoons, a great number of minor drawings, double-page cartoons for *Punch’s Almanac*, and 250 designs for *Punch’s Pocket Books*.
* By 1885, Tenniel was earning a $7,000 annual salary for his weekly *Punch* cartoon, which would translate to more than $165,000 by today’s standard.
* It was in 1893 that John Tenniel became Sir John Tenniel, having been knighted for his distinguished career at *Punch*.
* Tenniel retired in 1901 with a farewell banquet on June 12th, living out the rest of his life quietly in Kensington with his sister.

Artistic Style:

* + It is interesting to note that Tenniel used a specially-manufactured six-H pencil in his drawings and illustrations, which gave his work “a very fine and delicate line,” as noted by Edward Wakeling in 2008.
  + Many of Tenniel’s illustrations made it to publication through the several-step process of wood block engraving (Morris, 2005), whereby a rough sketch outline on paper would be transferred to tracing paper, and after subsequent value study and further copy, this would be transferred faintly into the prepared surface of wood block. Then Tenniel would use his six-H pencil in minute detail directly on the surface of the woodblock for the engraver.
  + It is my personal opinion that Tenniel’s popularity both in his political cartoons and his illustrations, is chiefly due to his attention to detail and the expression that is evident in the faces of his characters. His drawings contain both feeling and personality, whether his subject is “Ol’ Honest Abe” during the American Civil War, or a Hare sitting down to “A Mad Tea-Party.” His use of water colours is vibrant, and yet not overly so, giving just the needed contrast depending on the context of the painting. Certainly his attention to detail was well rewarded in the lasting images we continue to see published in editions of the *Alice* books. Tenniel brings life to his characters, and with them, personalities to suit.

Bibliography of Works:

[*Juvenile Verse and Picture Book*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Juvenile_Verse_and_Picture_Book&action=edit&redlink=1), (1846)

[*Undine*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Undine_(novella)) (1846)

[*Aesop's Fables*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesop%27s_Fables), 100 drawings (1848)

[Blair](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Blair)'s *Grave* (1858)

[Shirley Brooks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_William_Shirley_Brooks)'s [*The Gordian Knot*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Gordian_Knot&action=edit&redlink=1) (1860)

[Shirley Brooks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shirley_Brooks)'s [*The Silver Cord*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Silver_Cord) (1861)

[Moore](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Moore)'s *Lalla Rookh*, 69 drawings (1861)

[Lewis Carroll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_Carroll)'s [*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice%27s_Adventures_in_Wonderland) (1866)

[*The Mirage of Life*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Mirage_of_Life&action=edit&redlink=1), 1867

[Lewis Carroll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_Carroll)'s [*Through the Looking-Glass*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Through_the_Looking-Glass) (1870)

[Lewis Carroll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_Carroll)'s [*The Nursery "Alice"*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Nursery_%22Alice%22) (1890)

References and Further Reading:

Hancher, Michael. The Tenniel Illustrations to the “Alice” Books. Ohio University State Press, 1985.

Morris, Frankie. Artist of Wonderland, The Life, Political Cartoons, and Illustrations of Tenniel. University

of Virginia Press, 2005.

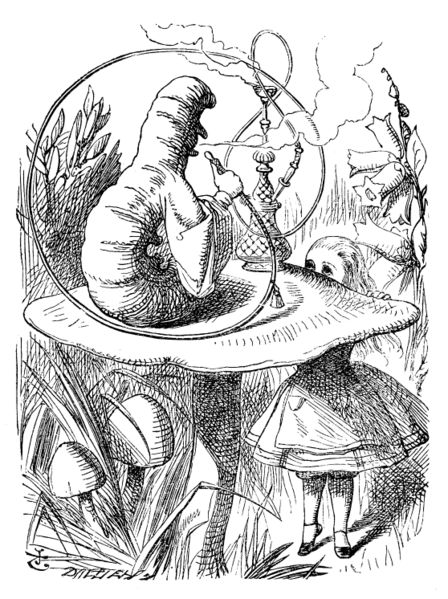
Wakeling, Edward. (March 2008). “John Tenniel (1820-1914)”. Retrieved 2009.09.14 from

[www.wakling.demon.co.uk/page10-Tenniel.htm](http://www.wakling.demon.co.uk/page10-Tenniel.htm)

As well as the John Tenniel Wikipedia site: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Tenniel>



<http://arthist.cla.umn.edu/aict/Tennielweb/punch/620809.html>



Carroll, Lewis. Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. Oxford University Press, 1998. p.40.